

CIRCULATION OF THE WALLACHIAN COINS FROM THE SECOND HALF OF 14TH CENTURY IN NORTHEASTERN BULGARIA

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Cuvinte cheie: *monede, Țara Românească, secolul al XIV-lea, nord-estul Bulgariei, tezaure monetare.*

Rezumat: *Scopul acestui articol este de a localiza și analiza monede ale Țării Românești (descoperiri izolate sau tezaure) din a doua jumătate a secolului al XIV-lea, descoperite în nord-estul Bulgariei. Creșterea semnificativă a numărului acestora în ultimii ani a dat naștere unor serii de întrebări și ne permite o ajustare a opiniilor exprimate. Principalele concluzii care pot fi trase: 1. Monedele Țării Românești din a doua jumătate a secolului al XIV-lea sunt răspândite pe tot cuprinsul nord-estului Bulgariei, ceea ce indică în mod clar intrarea lor în circulație în aceste ținuturi. Cele mai comune sunt emisiunile lui Mircea cel Bătrân, bătute în principal în prima perioadă a domniei, 1386-1396. Descoperirea monedelor acestui domnitor poate fi văzută ca o consecință a ofensivelor sale militare în aceste zone; 2. Monedele Țării Românești se regăsesc atât în descoperiri izolate cât și în tezaure. Acest fapt ne arată nu doar faptul că acestea circulau pe piața locală dar și că erau parte a comerțului dintre cele două state și că acestea erau printre piesele preferate pentru teaurizare; 3. Cele mai multe emisiuni (descoperiri izolate sau tezaure) au fost găsite în fortăreața Kastrici. Acest fapt ne conduce spre concluzia că de fapt Kastrici și nu Varna era principalul port implicat în comerțul cu Țara Românească în această perioadă; 4. Descoperirea unei cantități de monedă pe atât de mari precum cea din Kastrici și în Kaliakra poate contrazice faptul că Ruse era principala zonă geografică în care au circulat emisiunile muntene din a doua jumătate a secolului al XIV-lea. Numărul pieselor descoperite în cele două fortărețe este mai mare decât în întreaga regiune Ruse. Acest fapt indică în mod clar că tocmai aceste porturi (și în general coasta de nord a Mării Negre) sunt principalele puncte de distribuire a acestor monede.*

Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to find and analyze all Wallachian coins (single and collective Hoards) from the second half of 14th century found in Northeastern Bulgaria. Their significant increase in recent years led to a series of questions and allows to make some adjustments on the expressed opinions. Here the following conclusions that can be drawn: 1. The Wallachian coins from the second half of 14th century are spread throughout northeastern Bulgaria, which clearly indicates that they enter into coin circulation in these lands. The most common are*

* "Vladislav Varnenchik" Museum, Varna.

emissions of Mircea I, mostly minted in his first ruling period 1386-1396. Part of the finds of this Romanian ruler can be viewed as a consequence of its military offensive in these places; 2. The Wallachian coins are found both as single individuals and in collective hoards. This shows that not only they were circulating in Bulgarian markets but participated in the trade between the two countries and that these specimens were among the preferred for treasury; 3. The largest emissions (individual and collective Hoards) were found in the fortress Kastrici. A fact which leads to the conclusion that exactly Kastrici and not Varna was the port, in which was carried out the main commercial activity with the Wallachian voivodship during this period; 4. Finding of such a large amount of coins as in Kastrici and in Kaliakra can disprove that Rousse is the main geographical area where they are circulated Wallachian emissions from the second half of 14th century. The amount of specimens found in the two fortresses is more than in the whole region of Rousse. This fact clearly indicates that precisely these ports (and in general the northern Black Sea coast) are the main places where these coins were distributed.

The Bulgarian-Wallachian political and trade relationships in the Middle Ages are clearly shown by the coin finds, found in the two countries of that period. The purpose of this study is to find and analyze all Wallachian coins (single and collective Hoards) from the second half of 14th century found in Northeastern Bulgaria.

The time when the areas of Dobroudja are established in a separate domain as despotat is controversial. We know that in the second half of the 60's of 14th century the Bulgarian Tsar Ivan Alexander (1331-1371) yielded northeastern Bulgarian lands to despot Dobrotitsa, who created the Despotate of Dobroudja¹ – with successive capitals Karvuna, Kaliakra and Varna². In 2009 Georgi Atanasov published his monograph *The Despotic domain of Dobroudja*, where the author seeks out all Wallachian coins that circulated in this geographical area in the second half of XIV. Here we give the information about single finds, brought to us by Georgi Atanasov, and we add to it the information about discovered specimens of recent years. G. Atanasov notes that the Wallachian emissions are not very much, but are found in almost all centers of the Despotate. These coins are rare until the taking a Wallachian throne by Mircea I. The author stated that in such border with Wallachia economic center as Drastar are found only two coins of Vladislav I (Vlaicu) (1364-1377) - emissions that are quite common in the north of the Danube. Individual specimens of this ruler are known from Balchik³, Varna⁴, Păcuilui lui Soare –⁵ and Vetren⁶. Even more rare are the coins of Radu I (1377-1383) - Kaliakra - 1 and Păcuilui lui Soare – 2.⁷ Georgi Atanasov has not indicated that 2 specimens of Vlad I Usurper (1394-1397)

¹ Atanasov 2009, p. 103-105.

² Atanasov 2009, p. 231.

³ Yordanov 1990, p. 55; Dimitrov 1992, p. 178.

⁴ Atanasov 2009, p. 300.

⁵ Iliescu 1977, p. 155.

⁶ Yordanov, Atanasov 1990, p. 68.

⁷ Iliescu 1977, p. 155.

are known from Kaliakra.⁸ Significant growth marked the coins of Mircea I (1386-1418), found in almost all major centers of the Despotate – Kaliakra-21⁹, Drastar-15¹⁰, Păcuilul lui Soare – 4¹¹, Varna – 1¹², Kastrici – 3¹³, Karaach Tekke, Varna – 2¹⁴, Ovech – 1¹⁵, Balchik – 1¹⁶. From the adduced evidence of Georgi Atanasov became clear that the Wallachian coins appeared in a mass with Mircea I and are spread in almost all Despotate of Dobroudja.

By 2005 in the Archaeological Museum in Varna are kept ten dinars and ducats of the Wallachian rulers Vladislav I and Mircea I, originating in Varna and Varna district. Most of them have been found in the archaeological excavations of the medieval layers over the Roman Thermal Baths and the excavation of the medieval settlement of 13-14th century over the monastery of 9-11th century in the locality Teke Karaach.¹⁷ In recent years, the fortress Kastrici, residence “Evksinograd” near the city of Varna is intensively explored by the team of V. Pletnyov. Every year the amount of the coins finds significantly increased, including the Wallachian emissions. In the archaeological season in 2013 were discovered a large number of coins of the Wallachian voivodship from the end of the 14th century, mainly in several treasures, but also a considerable amount of individual specimens - a total of 156. These are emissions of Vlad I Usurper and mostly of Mircea I¹⁸. In 2014 are found ducats and denars of the voivodes Vladislav I and Mircea I of Wallachia (1386-1395) again.¹⁹ In regular archaeological excavations of the fortress Cherven have been found specimens of Radu I and Vladislav I.²⁰ Quite recently a coin of Mircea I have been published with general localization the region of Dobrich²¹. Wallachian coins from the end of the 14 - the beginning of 15th century were found in the fortress of Petrich.²² Recently several specimens from Kaliakra have been documented - 2 bani and 2 ducats of Mircea I and 1 ducat of Radu I.²³

The sporadic occurrence of specimens of the first Wallachian rulers Vlaicu I, Radu I and Vlad I in the Despotate of Dobroudja indicate that these emissions were part of the coin circulation in these lands. The significant increase of the number of specimens of Mircea I indicates an active policy of the ruler in the direction Drastari-Karvuna-Kaliakra, which has an impact on the coin circulation. G. Atanasov stated

⁸ Parushev 1990, p. 145.

⁹ Parushev 1990, p. 144-145; Atanasov 2009, p. 300.

¹⁰ Atanasov 2009, p. 300.

¹¹ Iliescu 1977, p. 155.

¹² Atanasov 2009, p. 300.

¹³ Atanasov 2009, p. 300.

¹⁴ Atanasov 2009, p. 300.

¹⁵ Atanasov 2009, p. 300.

¹⁶ Yordanov 1990, p. 55.

¹⁷ Lazarenko 2005, p. 226.

¹⁸ Pletnyov *et alii* 2014, p. 541.

¹⁹ Pletnyov *et alii* 2015a, p. 681.

²⁰ Yordanov 1998, p. 90, n. 20.

²¹ Parushev 2015, p. 144.

²² Pletnyov *et alii* 2015, p. 678.

²³ Petrunova 2014, p. 507-508.

that the large number of coins from his first coinage (1386-1396) is a new confirmation of his good relationships with Tsar Ivan Shishman²⁴. But the localization of emissions in the land of the Despotate of Dobroudja should speak for the fact that the Wallachian voivode has not only maintained a good relationships with the king of Târnovo, but with the rulers of the Dobroudja.

The coins of the Wallachian rulers were circulating in the lands of the empire of Târnovo. An evidence for this is that the emissions that are found in two of the largest fortresses at that time - Târnovo and Shumen. In Târnovo are found 16 silver coins of Wallachian voivodes - 10 of Vladislav I, one of Radu I and 5 of Mircea I. The coins of Vladislav I are emissions from two types of silver denars²⁵ and one type silver bani²⁶. The only coin of Radu I is from the type with multiray star on the averse²⁷. The emissions of Mircea are also from two types.²⁸ From the medieval Shumen are known total of 5 specimens. Two dinars of Vladislav I of the same types as the emissions in Târnovo and 3 ducats Mircea I. Zh. Zhekova believes that the coins of Mircea from the Fortress of Shumen should contact with the military campaigns of the Wallachian ruler in Bulgarian lands in 1390 and 1394²⁹.

The finding that can be made based on the comparison between the fortresses in empire of Târnovo and despotate of Dobroudja is that the Wallachian emissions from the end of 14- the beginning of 15th century enter in the trade in the northeastern Bulgarian lands within the borders of two Bulgarias. Initially only sporadically, but later when Mircea is ruler, the Wallachian coins become a mass phenomenon. Part of the emissions of this ruler can be connected with his offensives in the south from the Danube.

Collective Coin Hoards

Until 1992 L. Lazarov notes only two Hoards from Northeastern Bulgaria, in which there are coins of the Wallachian rulers. The first hoard comes from Ruse and contains the following coins: Ivan Alexander and Michael Asen (1337-71 / 80), Ivan Sratsimir (1360-1396), Orhan I (1324-1362), Murad I (1362-1389), Bayezid I (1389-1402), Francesco Dandolo (1329-1339) and Mircea I (2 pieces). Initially the hoard was dated to the middle of the 15th century, because of reported emissions of Murad II.³⁰ Later the treasure was redated by L. Lazarov, who reidentifies the emissions of the Ottoman ruler and finds that it actually are specimens of Murad I. So as the latest emissions in the hoard are appeared the coins of Bayezid I and Mircea I (two coins of this ruler were minted in the period 1386-1396).³¹ Another treasure from the village of Cherven, Ruse also contains emissions of the Wallachian voevoda.³² However, in this

²⁴ Atanasov 2009, p. 299-200.

²⁵ Lucian *et alii* 1977, p. 10, №15 и №18; Dochev 1994, p. 170.

²⁶ Lucian *et alii* 1977, p. 10, №15 и №18; Dochev 1994, p. 170.

²⁷ Lucian *et alii* 1977, p. 10, №78; Dochev 1994, p. 171.

²⁸ Lucian *et alii* 1977, p. 10, №178; Dochev 1994, p. 171.

²⁹ Zhekova 2006, p. 48.

³⁰ Gerasimov 1957, p. 325; Dimova 1962, p. 71-87.

³¹ Lazarov 1992, p. 34.

³² Yurukova 1978, p. 77.

hoard the type of the coins of Mircea is not known. L. Lazarov connects the evasion of the two treasures with the capture of the Bulgarian lands from the Ottomans in the period 1393-1396.³³ The same author says that until 1992 is known only a single hoard with coins of Mircea I, which contained 70 “polugrosha” of one type. The treasure was discovered in the village of Vardun, Targovishte.³⁴ As noted by the author unfortunately the hoard has not been saved and therefore the question of the type of the coins and timing of the concealment remains open.

From Kaliakra originates another coin hoard with a total of 58 Wallachian coins - 45 of Mircea and 13 of Vlad I. It was discovered in burned medieval village. The coins marked some kind of attack. V. Parushev can not give a definite answer whether the treasure was concealed due to the first conquer of Kaliakra by the Turks or another attack.³⁵

On 2 km. east of the fortress of Cherven is found a hoard with 1827 silver coins of Ivan Alexander with Michael Asen, Ivan Shishman and a Wallachian coin.³⁶

A coin hoard of 10 silver Wallachian coins of Vladislav I (1364-1377) is found in a gap of the stone construction of cell №2 of the north wing of the monastery “Great Lavra” “St. 40 Martyrs” in Veliko Tărnovo. The coins are well preserved. The hoard consists of 7 silver denars and 3 silver bani.³⁷

In the summer of 2003 during excavations in the “the Greek quarter” of the city of Varna was discovered a hoard of 26 silver coins from the 14th century. They were found in and around the lower jaw to the skull, discovered at one meter depth below modern pitch. From this hoard the Archaeological Museum in Varna has received these coins: 6 soldini of the Venetian doges Francesco Dandolo (1329-1339) and Bartolomeo Gradenigo (1339-1342), two groshes of the Serbian King Stefan Dushan (1331-1355), one dinar of the Wallachian ruler Vladislav I (1364-1377) and three groshes of the Bulgarian Tsars Ivan Alexander (1331-1371) and Ivan Sratsimir (1356-1396). Besides them, there were still fragments of 4 soldini, a damaged dinar of Vladislav I, a broken grosh of Ivan Sratsimir and eight heavily corroded, broken groshes of King Stefan Dushan.³⁸

In 2008, during excavations of the southern wall of Drastar was found a little treasure of 4 burnt coins of Mircea I.³⁹

In recent years there were found several Hoards from the fortress “Kastrici” which consist solely of Wallachian coins. In 2011 is found a treasure of silver ducats of Mircea I (23 pcs.)⁴⁰. In 2012 it was discovered a treasure of silver ducats of the same ruler⁴¹. During the archaeological season in 2013 in the fortress Kastrici are revealed a large number of coins of the Wallachian voivodship from the the end of the

³³ Lazarov 1992, p. 34.

³⁴ Gerasimov 1939, p. 454.

³⁵ Parushev 1990, p. 145.

³⁶ Yordanov 1998, p. 90, n. 20.

³⁷ Dochev 1991, p. 44-46; Dochev 2004, p. 144-198.

³⁸ Lazarenko 2005, p. 215-238.

³⁹ Atanasov 2009, p. 311, n. 13

⁴⁰ Pletnyov *et alii* 2012, p. 459.

⁴¹ Pletnyov *et alii* 2013, p. 420.

14th century, mainly in several treasures: 1. 21 groshes of Mircea I; 2. 130 billion coins of Vlad I Usurper and Mircea I, minted from 1395 to 1396; 3. 6 silver ducats of Mircea I.⁴²

Different suggestions have been expressed regarding the entry of the Wallachian emissions in Bulgarian lands. As noted above G. Atanasov stated that the significant increase of the number of specimens of Mircea I indicates an active policy of the ruler in the direction Drastar-Karvuna-Kaliakra, which has an impact on the coin circulation. The author stated that the large number of coins from his first coinage (1386-1396) is a new confirmation of his good relationships with tsar Ivan Shishman.⁴³ Based on the lack of published Hoards of coins of Mircea I, L. Lazarov explained that it is difficult to attempt to spread their entry into coin circulation in Bulgarian lands. The author writes that most likely the influx of the coins from the first phase of the reign of the ruler, which coincides with the fall of Bulgaria under Ottoman rule, was bigger. The researcher notes that the later emissions of the Wallachian leader of the second stage of his rule have been found in Veliko Tărnovo and Shumen, which means that there was a receipt of such emissions after 1396, in the beginning of the 15th century.⁴⁴ According to G. Dzanev *“Rousse is the main area of distribution in the lands south of the Danube of the silver coins of the Wallachian rulers from the second half of the XIV century - Vladislav I, Radu I and Mircea I.”* The author points this out as a cause the primary role, which was played on the road crossing the Ruse-Giurgiu in political and economic relations between the Empire of Tărnovo and Wallachia.⁴⁵ A similar opinion expressed S. Yordanov *“Too evidential is the significant presence in Rousse of the early Wallachian coins from the second half of 14th c., as well as coins of Ivan Sratsimir (1360-1396), which reveal the increased role of the river as transport artery and priority development of local commercial contacts with Wallachian principality.”*⁴⁶ Based on its knowledge of single and collective hoards of Wallachian coins I. Lazarenko suggests that the main groups emissions – of Vladislav I and Mircea I enter at different times and different ways in Bulgarian lands. The author concludes that the silver emissions of Vladislav I are brought from a limited number of people who had contact with Wallachia. The emissions of Mircea have been received in large quantities with the Wallachian army that occupied the Despotate of Dobroudja or the major urban centers. Therefore, according to the author, the ducats of Mircea minted during his first rule, received the status of a local coin. The researcher believes that the discovered coins of Vladislav I in Varna could serve as an indication of economic contacts between the voivodship and the Black Sea coast. I. Lazarenko suggests that from Varna, as the largest and closest port to Wallachia, has pursued import and export from or for the voivodship.⁴⁷

⁴² Pletnyov *et alii* 2014, p. 541.

⁴³ Atanasov 2009, p. 299-300.

⁴⁴ Lazarov 1992, p. 34-35.

⁴⁵ Dzanev 1998, p. 19.

⁴⁶ Yordanov 1998, p. 89-90.

⁴⁷ Lazarenko 2005, p. 226.

The review shows that Wallachian coins from the second half of XIV century have their role and place in the coin circulation in Bulgarian lands during this period. Their significant increase in recent years led to a series of questions and allows to make some adjustments on the expressed opinions. Here the following conclusions that can be drawn:

1. The Wallachian coins from the second half of 14th century are spread throughout Northeastern Bulgaria, which clearly indicates that they enter into coin circulation in these lands. The most common are emissions of Mircea I, mostly minted in his first ruling period 1386-1396. Part of the finds of this Romanian ruler can be viewed as a consequence of its military offensive in these places.

2. The Wallachian coins are found both as single individuals and in collective hoards. This shows that not only they were circulating in Bulgarian markets but participated in the trade between the two countries and that these specimens were among the preferred for treasury.

3. The largest emissions (individual and collective Hoards) were found in the fortress Kastrici. A fact which leads to the conclusion that exactly Kastrici and not Varna was the port, in which was carried out the main commercial activity with the Wallachian voivodship during this period.

4. Finding of such a large amount of coins as in Kastrici and in Kaliakra can disprove that Rousse is the main geographical area where they are circulated Wallachian emissions from the second half of 14th century. The amount of specimens found in the two fortresses is more than in the whole region of Rousse. This fact clearly indicates that precisely these ports (and in general the northern Black Sea coast) are the main places where these coins were distributed.

For sure the Wallachian coins from the second half of 14th century have their place and role in the coin circulation in the northeastern Bulgarian lands during this period. Future archaeological research in this geographical area and the publication of new numismatic material will confirm or disprove the author's expressed views.

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Figure 1. Single coin finds of Wallachian coins from the second half of the 14th century in Northeastern Bulgaria.

Figura 1. Descoperiri izolate de monede ale Țării Românești din a doua jumătate a secolului al XIV-lea din nord-estul Bulgariei.

Figure 2. Coin hoards containing Wallachian coins from the second half of the 14th century in Northeastern Bulgaria.

Figura 2. Tezaure conținând monede ale Țării Românești din a doua jumătate a secolului al XIV-lea din nord-estul Bulgariei.



Fig. 1. Single coin finds of the Wallachian coins from the second half of the 14th century in Northeastern Bulgaria.

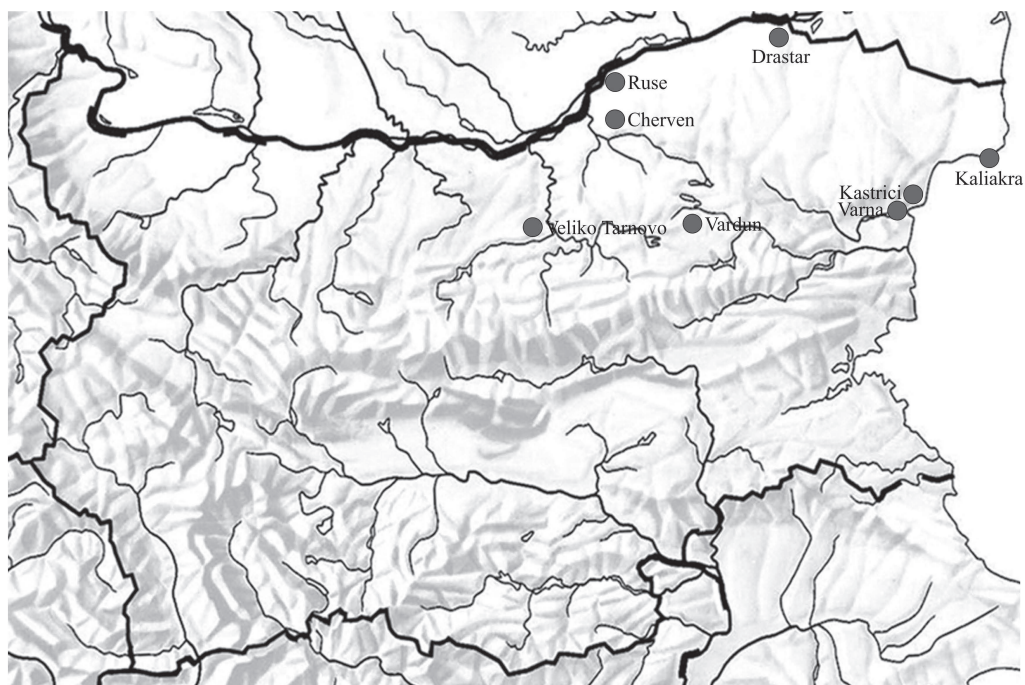


Fig. 2. Coin hoards of the Wallachian coins from the second half of the 14th century in Northeastern Bulgaria.